Nutrition Facts
Read the Label

TIPS FOR PARENTS

Remind Your Kids to Use the Nutrition Facts Label

As a parent, you can help your kids learn about nutrition and establish healthful dietary habits in many situations. It's easy to talk about food choices throughout the day.

At Home

At the Supermarket

At Restaurants

While Packing a Lunch

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Be a Role Model for Label Reading

Helping your kids understand how to read the Nutrition Facts Label on food packages is important. After all — the label is a tool for **making healthy food choices** that they'll be able to use **throughout their lives**!

Family Actions for
Making Smart Food Choices

Use teachable moments in everyday activities. These tips can make it easy to help your kids get their food facts first! Work together to explore using the **Nutrition Facts Label** on food packages to make informed dietary choices.

It's What's On the Back (or Side)
That Counts

When they're snacking, remind your kids to check out the black and white **Nutrition Facts Label** on food packages. That's where they can find the nutrition information they need to know.

Tips for
Kids

Parents have lots of opportunities to discuss nutrition with their kids. And even though busy schedules mean that sometimes families can't eat together, there are plenty of times to talk about healthy eating habits at home with your child — even away from the dinner table.

On the following pages, you'll find practical label reading tips to help your kids get their food facts first. They'll be learning to make informed nutrition decisions — and establishing healthful dietary habits that can last a lifetime!

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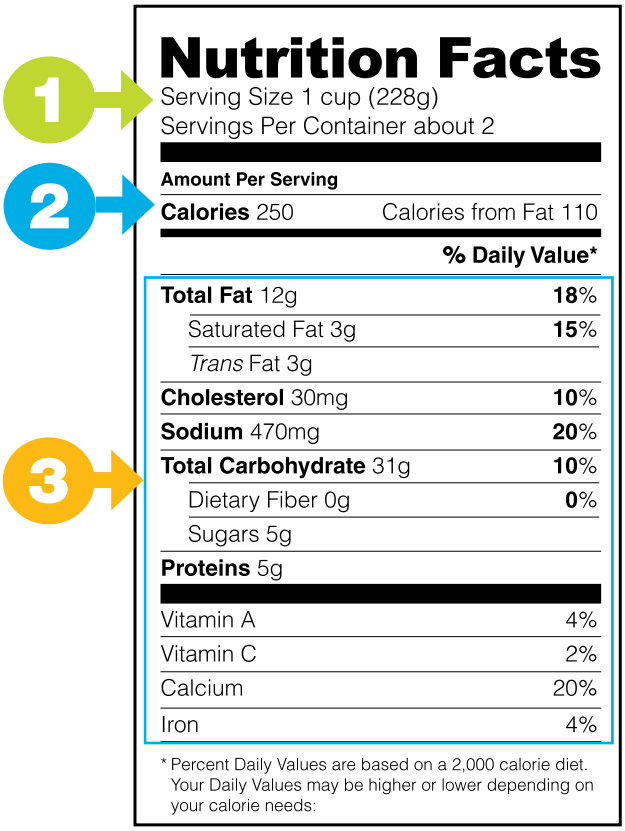
Using the Nutrition Facts Label



1.

Check out the serving size. One package may contain more than one serving — so encourage your child to use the serving size on the label to discover the total number of calories and nutrients per package.

2.

Consider the calories. 400 or more calories per serving of a single food is high and 100 calories or less is moderate. Challenge your child to keep track of the calories he or she consumes throughout he day.

The food label is based on a 2,000 calorie diet — but your child's calorie needs might be different. To learn more about "target" calories and to get a customized Daily Food Plan, visit: **www.choosemyplate.gov**.

3.

Choose nutrients wisely and pick foods that are lower in certain fats, cholesterol and sodium when making daily food choices.

Nutrients To Get More Of: Potassium, fiber, vitamins A & C, iron, and calcium. Encourage kids to choose foods with a higher %DV of these important nutrients.

Nutrients To Get Less Of: *Trans* fat, saturated fat, cholesterol, sodium, and sugars. Remind kids to choose foods that are lower in these nutrients.

- Your child should consume as little *trans* fat as possible and limit foods with added sugar. Since *trans* fat and sugar do not have a %DV listed on the label, your child can compare the *trans* fat and sugar content in foods by comparing the grams per serving!
- Remind your child that when comparing the %DV of nutrients, 5% DV is low; 20% DV is high!

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At Home

Parent Tips to Help Kids Make Smart Choices!

Reminding your kids to read the Nutrition Facts Label starts in your own kitchen cabinet!

Kids Can...

Guess the Serving Size

When your kids are choosing snacks, challenge them to measure out what they think is one serving. Then have them measure out what the actual serving size is according to the Nutrition Facts Label on the food package.

Discuss any difference in amounts so they can see how many servings they're actually eating, and remind them to always check out the serving size.

Prepare Individual Servings of Snacks

Have your child check the Nutrition Facts Label on the food packages of their favorite snacks and measure out single servings. Keep individual servings in resealable plastic bags or containers.

Read the Label with Friends

When your child has friends over, challenge them to Read the Label when they want a snack. Encourage them to see who can find the most interesting fact on a Nutrition Facts Label and try to stump the others. They can use questions such as, "How big is one serving of these chips?" Have them choose the snacks lowest in nutrients to get less of.

Have a Snack Food Scavenger Hunt

Invite each family member to choose a favorite snack food in the kitchen, and have your child lead everyone in finding which food is highest or lowest in a particular nutrient.

For example, compare the number of calories in one serving of each food. Find the nutritional "winner" with the lowest calories. Use different nutrients on different days: on another day, Read the Label for foods high in nutrients to get more of and find those "winners." Remind your kids to choose nutrients wisely when deciding on snacks.

You Can...

Compliment Label Reading

If you see children reading a label, make sure to compliment them and encourage their action. Let them know they are taking important steps towards managing their own health and nutrition!

Make the Shopping List Together

Have your child Read the Label in the pantry and refrigerator by using the Nutrition Facts Label on food and beverage packages. Encourage your child to pay particular attention to those foods that are higher in nutrients to get more of and lower in nutrients to get less of. Then, invite your child to add "restocking" items to the family shopping list using this new knowledge as a guide.

Read Labels While Unpacking Groceries

You and your kids can check out labels while putting away your purchases. Have your child choose which food he or she thinks was the best purchase that day and use the Nutrition Facts Label on the food package to explain why.

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At Lunch Time

Parent Tips to Help Kids Make Smart Choices!

Whether packing a lunch or eating at the cafeteria, your kids can start to take control of their own food choices.

Kids Can...

Take the Great Lunchbox Challenge!

Challenge your child to pack a 600 calorie lunch. Have your child Read the Label on breads, sandwich ingredients and snacks!

- He or she can measure out single servings of snacks into plastic bags or containers and pack the individual servings in the lunch bag.
- If your child's usual sandwich ingredients surpass the calorie limit, try different items like low-fat whole grain tortillas or pitas instead of bread. Also, try spreads like mustard or hummus instead of mayonnaise.

Read the Label in the Cafeteria Line

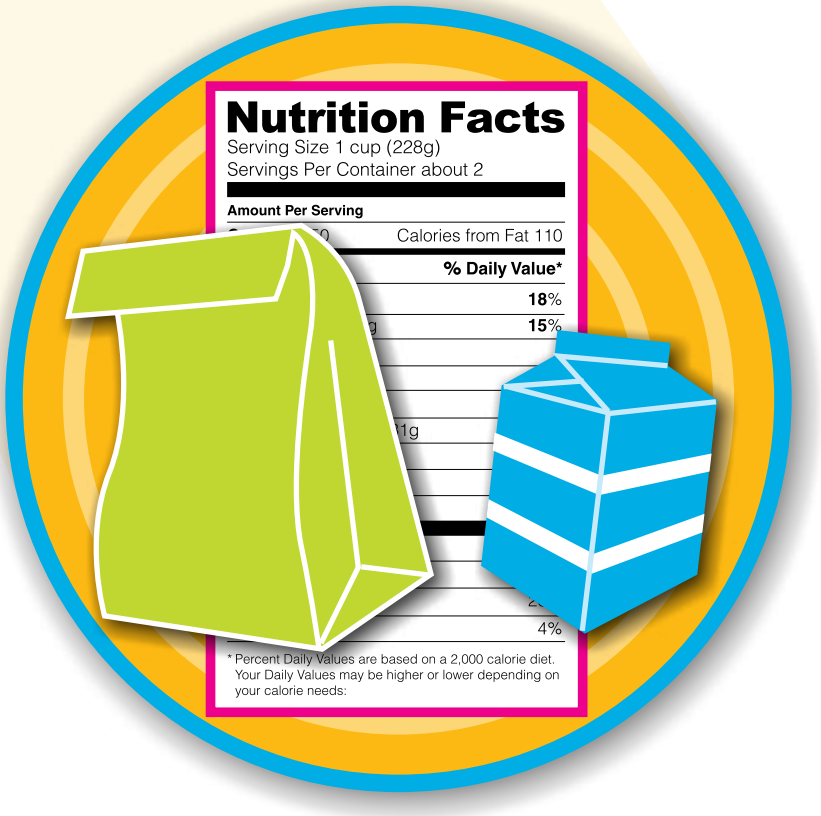
Remind your child to check out the Nutrition Facts Label on food packages in the cafeteria. Encourage your child to choose foods that are high in nutrients to get more of and low in nutrients to get less of. He or she can Read the Label with milk products, snacks and many other cafeteria items. Emphasize that the Nutrition Facts Label can help your child to choose nutrients wisely.

You Can...

Leave a Note

Do you pack your child's lunch? If so, leave a friendly note reminding him or her to Read the Label on the foods you've packed. Point out one healthy item, such as a bag of mini-carrots.

Remind your kids to Read the Label on beverages, too!



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At Restaurants

Parent Tips to Help Kids Make Smart Choices!

Sometimes it's a little harder to discover nutrition information at restaurants. Use these tips … and also remind your kids that they can ask for the restaurant to provide the information!

Kids Can...

Read the Label Before You Go

Your child can check out the nutrition information on some restaurants' Websites before going there to eat. This is a great chance to have your kids discover nutrition facts about the foods they like and decide what to order in advance. Remind them to consider the calories and choose nutrients wisely while selecting their foods.

Check Out the Nutrition Information

Have your child find the nutrition information at the restaurant. If it's not posted, he or she can ask to see it. Many restaurants offer a number of types and sizes of foods, and obtaining the nutritional information about the restaurant's food is the first step towards making informed choices about what to order.

Compare Different Foods and Meal Sizes

Have your kids Read the Label to see the differences in nutrients between various items. Compare different ways foods are prepared, like grilled chicken vs. fried chicken, baked potatoes vs. French fries ... and compare small vs. large portions. Remember that a super-sized item will contain more calories than a standard-sized item, because the serving size is larger!

Substitute One Item

Ask your child to compare different food items using the Nutrition Facts Label. He or she can see which foods are lower in nutrients to get less of. Challenge your child to replace one high-fat or high-calorie item he or she would have ordered with one that has lower calories or fat. Or, encourage your child to choose a food with lower sodium content.

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At The Supermarket

Parent Tips to Help Kids Make Smart Choices!

Supermarkets offer almost unlimited opportunities for exploring the Nutrition Facts Label and making smart food choices!

Kids Can...

- **In the Supermarket Aisle**

  Challenge your child to Read the Label on different items at the supermarket. This is a great opportunity to compare different foods and use the Nutrition Facts Label on food packages!

- **Select Canned Fruit with the Fewest Grams of Sugar**

  Have your child check out the Nutrition Facts Label on different canned fruit to find the one with the lowest amount of sugar.

- **Find Vegetables with the Highest Percentage of Vitamin A**

  Send your child to the freezer section to Read the Label on different frozen vegetables, including types with and without sauce. Ask him or her to find the one with the lowest fat content and the highest amount of vitamin A. Remind your child that vitamin A is a nutrient to get more of.

- **Choose the Cereal with the Fewest Grams of Sugar**

  Ask your child to find a cereal that is low in sugar and high in fiber. Have him or her compare that cereal to one you currently have at home. Remind your child to choose nutrients wisely.

- **Find the Frozen Pizza with the Lowest Total Fat**

  Ask your child to Read the Label on frozen pizzas to see which has the lowest fat and sodium, two nutrients to get less of. Choose the one that is highest in nutrients to get more of, such as calcium and iron.

- **Check Out the Nutrition Facts Label on Nuts and Dried Fruits**

  Nuts and dried fruits can make great snacks because they often contain nutrients to get more of. However, too many servings can add up to a lot of calories. Have your child check out the serving sizes for peanut butter, nuts and dried fruit. Remind him or her that serving size is important.

You Can...

- **Continue the Dialogue After Leaving the Store**

  Make the car ride home and the unpacking of groceries into teachable moments. Ask your kids if they learned anything interesting while reading labels. Use their answers as a springboard for discussing how easy it is to use the Nutrition Facts Label on food packages.

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